

**River Valley Charter School  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Meeting # 255  
May 14, 2019 7:00 pm**

**In Attendance: Officers:** Chair: Mark Belanger, Vice Chair: Mason Mitchell-Daniels, Treasurer: Pamela Brockmeier Armstrong, Secretary: Katherine Brown **Trustees:** Jennifer McCormick, Nat Coughlin, Todd Atanasoff, Alfred Link, Karina Moltz, Catherine Martin, John Siegfried, Josh Porter, Amber Hewett

**Director:** Andy Willemsen

**Public:** Deb McCrevan, Jonnie Lyn Evans, Dan Bouchard

**Faculty Representative-** Jane Patterson

Montessori Minute - Jane Noyes presented examples of the "Sun's Day" project created by E1 students.

**Call to Order: 7:05**

**Public Comment:** none

**Acceptance of Previous Minutes:**

**Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion "To Accept Previous Minutes"**

Motion by Karina Moltz, 2nd Todd Atanasoff. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

**Director's Report-** (See Appendix A)

Andy Willemsen reported that the Accountability Plan was received today and that the guidelines will be shared at the next Accountability Committee meeting.

Staffing Update- Jonnie Lyn Evans announced the new Assistant Director, Dan Bouchard, present at the meeting and current RVCS parent.

Parent Survey- Andy Willemsen reported that the survey had strong response rate and overall positive reviews.

Andy Willemsen shared with the Board that the private foundation donor has committed for another 2 years and that Grand Friends Day was a huge success with over 150 visitors.

Development Committee- No meeting in May. Jennifer McCormick reported that the Development Committee is planning for the Maritime Mixer, the Parents Alliance is assisting with sorting the photos from Grand friends Day and sending with thank yous. Field Day is scheduled for the last day of school.

Accountability Committee- (See Appendix B)

Karina Moltz reported 255 responses from 160 respondents from the Parent Survey. The Accountability Committee would like to review the survey design in order for parents to answer about a specific child. The plan will be to utilize members of the Board and parents to assist with updated Parent Survey.

Finance Committee- (See Appendix C)

Pamela Brockmeier Armstrong reported on the Finance Committee meeting stating that Deb McCrevan reviewed the pre-budget with the committee. Pam reminded the Board that last year, the Director, supported by the Board, moved to bring faculty salaries more in-line with District salaries by lifting them 12% on the whole. This year, Administration is asking the Board to approve increases of 3.1%.

Mark Belanger reminded the Board of the school's refinance last year and how that made an impact on the budget. Jonnie Lyn Evans stated the importance of all Board members having a solid understanding of the budget. Deb McCrevan stated she would update her power point to share with the Board at the beginning of the new fiscal year.

**VOTE: Mark Belanger called for a motion "To Authorize \$3,026,045 for salaries and wages for the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget to enable timely Employee Agreements"**

Motion by Nat Coughlin, 2nd Alfred Link. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

**VOTE: Pamela Brockmeier Armstrong called for a motion "To Authorize the "School to utilize surplus revenues for the current fiscal year. These funds would be used at the Director's discretion for items including staff bonuses, classroom furniture and equipment, technology, and Montessori Materials. These funds would be spent prior to fiscal year-end and managed in such a way that spending does not exceed the budget surplus"**

Motion by Nat Coughlin, 2nd John Siegfried. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous. 1 abstain from Alfred Link.

Committee on Trustees-

Mason Mitchell Daniels reminded members of the Board to fill out financial disclosure forms from DESE.

Mason Mitchell Daniels introduced a new potential Board member Sam Jordan and stated that he would be primarily remote. Jennifer McCormick asked how he would be active on a committee. Mason Mitchell Daniels suggested he would be remote in a committee as well.

Mark Belanger suggested that we're looking long term. Amber Hewett spoke to her long history with Sam Jordan as a RVCS student.

**Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion "To Accept Sam Jordan's Application to Be a New Board Member"**

Motion by Amber Hewett, 2nd Katherine Board. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

Mason Mitchell Daniels updated the Board with the series of events since the May Board meeting and specifically her conversation with Nancy Durkee. John Siegfried clarified the difference between a negative vote and an abstaining vote.

**Vote: Mason Mitchell Daniels called for a Motion "To Accept Nancy Durkee's Application to Be a New Board Member"**

Motion by Mason Mitchell Daniels, 2nd Nat Coughlin. 11 yes votes, 2 abstentions from John Siegfried and Mark Belanger.

June 18 - Retreat Dinner/Discussion - Nat Coughlin, Josh Porter and Mason Mitchell Daniels are creating the agenda for "Board Self- Reflection"  
Bylaws update-

Nat Coughlin reported on the Director Review notes. The Committee on Trustees has collected 360 feedback from all committees. Nat Coughlin asked the Accountability Committee to update their response now that they have received Parent Survey results. Nat Coughlin asked Andy Willemsen to complete the same survey the Board received. Nat Coughlin stated that the Committee on Trustees is looking to move away from the metric style review and focus on the "keep doing" "start doing" "stop doing" approach.

Discussion- Will the Committee on Trustees take on the Director Review? Potentially a sub-committee within the Committee on Trustees. Nat Coughlin will send additional info for feedback before the next Board meeting. Mark Belanger suggested that the Board check in with Andy Willemsen after to see if it was an improvement.

**Vote: Mark Belanger called for a Motion "To Adjourn"**

Motion by John Siegfried, 2nd Pamela Brockmeier Armstrong. Board of Directors vote to accept was unanimous.

Adjourn:8:24

Appendix A.

**Director's Report to the River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees  
May 14, 2019**

**Accountability Plan**

The Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign has just issued their guidelines for creating the official Accountability Plan for the next charter term. This document serves as a primary tool for the OCSSR to evaluate schools, and is a central component of our Annual Reports.

Below is the process and timeline:

May-June: Draft Accountability Plan and submit a first draft to OCSSR.

June-August: Revise Accountability Plan with support from Department staff.

September: Have the school's board vote to approve the Accountability Plan.

October: Submit the Accountability Plan as an amendment request.

We will share the guidelines with the Accountability Committee and solicit their input during the June meeting. If we have completed a draft by the June Board meeting, we will provide it for review at that time.

### **Staffing Update**

The new Assistant Director for RVCS will be Dan Bouchard. Dan comes to us with extensive school leadership experience, including three years as Principal of the Saints Academy & St. Mary School in Beverly. He holds a CAGS in Educational Leadership as well as a Massachusetts Principal's license. Dan's resume is included in this month's Board packet.

We are pleased to announce that we have hired Laura Hunt to serve as the Middle School English Language Arts Teacher. Laura has a long tenure at the school as both an Elementary 2 Lead Teacher and as our Academic Program Coordinator. Laura is Montessori trained, and has distinguished herself as an outstanding educator and collaborator.

We are nearing the end of the search process for our remaining openings, and hope to have our staff for next year fully in place within the next two weeks.

### **Parent Survey**

We received 161 responses to this year's Parent Survey, up from 152 last year, and 116 the prior year. The quantitative responses (multiple choice) were strongly positive for nearly all questions. The few areas that received more than a few "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses included special education & 504 services. The open response feedback was also largely positive, though contained calls for greater consistency between classrooms, increased academic rigor and improved communication regarding our Montessori curriculum. The quantitative results were shared with the school community through Happenings on May 8<sup>th</sup>. I have also shared and reviewed the results with the Accountability Committee, and they will report out in more detail.

### **Private Foundation Support**

We received confirmation from our private donor that they will honor their pledge of a \$100,000 grant to RVCS for the next two years. I have met with the funders, and we provided an accounting of the impact of their support on programming at the school.

### **Grand Friends Day**

We had another wonderful Grand Friends Day on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Many thanks to Jonnie Lyn Evans, Jen McCormick and their team of parent volunteers for organizing. Over 150 visitors spent the morning in classrooms with the children, and many expressed high admiration for the work happening here at River Valley.

Appendix B.

Accountability Committee Meeting Minutes:

Date of meeting: May 6, 2019

Present: N. Durkee, J.L. Evans, S Houghton, K Moltz, A. Link, A. Willemsen

Discussion:

### **2019 Parent Survey**

This meeting discussion concerned the review of the responses to the Parent Survey.

- 255 responses from 160 respondents represent a very high response rate
  - o The disparity comes from some parents responding on behalf of more than one child
- A majority of the responses were overwhelmingly positive.

**Areas for effort identified through survey:**

- o The response rate on the open ended questions indicates that most are satisfied, but there are still areas for improvement
  - Communications. The school website, calendar and dissemination efforts to parents are a perennial issues
  - Academic rigor and alignment. Several parents asked for higher expectation, “stronger” curriculum, and greater consistency between classrooms
  - IEPs and 504s. An area of understandable scrutiny, there were both wonderfully positive and some negative comments.

**Survey Design**

The bulk of the discussion concerned ideas for streamlining the questionnaire design and reporting methodology. More specifically, we discussed ways to structure the survey tool to avoid forcing respondents to deal with questions that do not pertain to them, allow data sorting by grade level, and/or to let parents with multiple children answer the questions more efficiently.

The Committee agreed to take on the task of seeking out parents with survey design expertise among the school community.

Appendix C.

**River Valley Charter School  
Finance Committee – May 7, 2019**

Attendees:

Pam Armstrong  
Mark Belanger  
Jonnie Lyn Evans  
Deb McCrevan  
Andy Willemsen

**Meeting Notes & Highlights:**

1. Deb has created a pre-budget in preparation for our Finance Committee budget meeting next month, which will lead to the Board budget vote at the next meeting of the Board. Note that Deb bases her budgeting on the 3 inputs to student tuition: foundation base rate (stable), current above foundation rate (variable), and Deb's adjustment to the current

above foundation rate (she decreases it by 1.5% for cushion.)

2. To continue the budgeting process, the Board will take a vote now on the proposed salary increase for faculty and staff. Recall that last year, the Director, supported by the Board, moved to bring faculty salaries more in-line with District salaries by lifting them 12% on the whole. This year, Administration is asking us to approve increases of 3.1%.
  - a. **VOTE: The Board votes to Authorize \$3,026,045 for salaries and wages for the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget to enable timely Employee Agreements.**
3. In the past, the Board has voted to authorize the Director to apply surplus as they see fit. These funds have been used to fund staff bonuses in particular. It is too early to determine what the surplus will be, so no dollar amount is attached to this vote.
  - a. **VOTE: Authorize the "School" to utilize surplus revenues for the current fiscal year. These funds would be used at the Director's discretion for items including staff bonuses, classroom furniture and equipment, technology, and Montessori Materials. These funds would be spent prior to fiscal year-end and managed in such a way that spending does not exceed the budget surplus.**
4. The committee reviewed RVCS cash balances, tuition, and projections – all continue to be in good order.
5. Our June meeting will focus on the budget that will be brought to the Board for an approval vote the following week.